MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, July 14, 2022

Time-lapse video of repair work: https://we.tl/t-AgHdoIGx1E

# New Repair Crew Helps City of San Diego Set Record for Fixing Underground Pipes

## MAYOR GLORIA'S DECISION TO BOLSTER REPAIR CREWS QUADRUPLES ANNUAL IN-HOUSE PIPE REPLACEMENTS FOR AGING STORM DRAIN SYSTEM

SAN DIEGO – With an aging storm drain system in need of significant repairs, Mayor Todd Gloria and City Councilmember Marni von Wilpert were joined by neighborhood residents Thursday in Otay Mesa to celebrate a record-breaking year for in-house pipe replacements following Mayor Gloria's decision to bolster repair crews a year ago.

**"We need major infrastructure upgrades across San Diego because past administrations failed to properly invest in our neighborhoods, from street repair to underground pipes,"** Mayor Todd Gloria said. **"By adding more pipe-repair crews, we're making a down payment on our future by replacing those aging pipes now before they burst and require costly emergency fixes down the road. I want to applaud the hard work of our Stormwater crews who are out there every day getting the job done for the people we proudly serve."**

Mayor Gloria invited nearby residents and the Stormwater Department employees who worked on the project to join him in writing their signatures on the final piece of pipe before crews installed it to complete the three-month pipeline replacement project in a residential neighborhood south of Silver Wing Recreation Center. That set a City record with 3,960 linear feet of pipe replacement in a fiscal year – four times as much as City crews repaired in Fiscal Year 2020, the year before Mayor Gloria took office.

Last year, Mayor Gloria expanded the Stormwater Department's pipe-repair efforts by adding a second in-house pipeline replacement crew. Following a hiring process, that crew began work in January 2022 – doubling the number of personnel (30) available for repairs and replacement. Those crews proactively fix pipe failures to avoid costly emergency repairs. The following chart shows pipe replacement progress during the past five years:

| Fiscal Year | Pipe Replacement Personnel | Pipe Replacement (linear feet) |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2018 | 8 | 257 |
| 2019 | 8 | 104 |
| 2020 | 13 | 910 |
| 2021 | 15 | 2979 |
| 2022 | 30 | 3960 |

Most of the City's stormwater infrastructure was built in the 20th Century and is past its useful life, resulting in system deterioration and failure. Age combined with historic underfunding of the storm drain system has increased the risk of failures that could lead to neighborhood flooding.

The Otay Mesa project is one of 1,800 known stormwater pipe failures citywide that, if not prioritized for repair, would likely negatively affect the surrounding neighborhood with sinkholes, road closures and safety impacts. In fact, the Stormwater Department expedited this project after a sinkhole was discovered that caused damage to two nearby properties.

City crews began work April 1 to remove 1,400 feet of damaged corrugated metal pipe that was first installed in the late 1960s and beyond its useful life. It was replaced with larger, reinforced concrete pipes that are expected to serve the neighborhood for the next century.

**"When it rains, stormwater flows from roofs, sidewalks, and other urban surfaces onto city streets, picking up pollution and trash along the way and ultimately flowing untreated into our oceans and bays. Investing in our stormwater infrastructure must be a top priority to keep our ocean healthy and clean and maintain the natural beauty that makes San Diego the place that we call home,"** said Councilmember von Wilpert, who chairs the Council's Active Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. **"Adding more stormwater repair crews to our City workforce was a huge step in the right direction and now we are working together with the Mayor to secure state and federal funding to continue this vital infrastructure repair work."**

To help tackle its $1.4 billion infrastructure backlog, the Stormwater Department has secured state funds totaling $54 million for key projects in South Mission Beach and the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon. In addition, the City Council recently approved a low-interest federal loan that paves the way for an investment of up to $733 million in stormwater projects – from pipeline replacements to pump station repairs – during the next five years.

**"One of the huge benefits of proactive pipeline replacement is that we can avoid a major failure that would require an expensive emergency fix," said Bethany Bezak, interim Director of the Stormwater Department. "The additional repair crew gives us more flexibility as we prioritize projects and do spot repairs around the city."**

To learn more about stormwater infrastructure, go to thinkblue.org.

###